

Message Text

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ACTION PM-05

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 ISO-00 ACDA-12 AID-05 OMB-01 TRSE-00
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L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
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FM AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1393
INFO SECDEF WASHDC
JCS
CINCEUR
USDAO KINSHASA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 LIBREVILLE 1995

DEPT PLEASE PASS ACDA, USAID

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS, MPOL, GB
SUBJECT: SECURITY ASSISTANCE ASSESSMENT: GABON

REF: (A) STATE 167901 (B) STATE 168320
(C) 77 LIBREVILLE A-41 (NOTAL)

FOLLOWING ARE REPLIES TO QUESTIONS PO ED PARA 3(A) REFTTEL A
AND PARA 2 REFTTEL B KEYED BY NUMMBER TO SUBPARAGRAPHS THEREIN:

(1) AFTER CONCLUSION OF THE FY 78 \$2 MILLION DOLLAR FMS
CREDIT AGREEMENT WITHIN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS, OUR SECURITY
ASSISTANCE RELATIONSHIP WITH GABON FOR THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE
WILL CONSIST PRIMARILY OF A LIMITED READINESS TO ENTERTAIN
GABONESE REQUESTS FOR PURCHASES THROUGH COMMERCIAL OR FMS
CHANNELS. SUCH ACCESS TO DEFENSE ARTICLES WOULD PROBABLY
BE USED ONLY SPARINGLY BY THE GABONESE BUT PROVISION OF
THIS OPTION WOULD CONTINUE TO SERVE U.S. INTERESTS AND
OBJECTIVES. SPECIFICALLY THESE INCLUDE ENCOURAGEMENT OF
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GABON'S PRO-WESTERN, NON-IDEOLOGICAL INCLINATIONS;
DEMONSTRATION OF CONTINUING CONCERN FOR GABONESE (AND
OTHER AFRICAN MODERATES') SECURITY; AND PRESERVATION OF
A FAVORABLE CLIMATE FOR THE OVERALL BILATERAL
RELATIONSHIP FOR ACHIEVEMENT OF OUR OTHER, PRIMARILY
ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL, INTERESTS. THIS SI CONCEIVED
AS A MINIMUM PROGRAM TO PROMOTE STABILITY IN A FRIENDLY

GABO, SYMPATHETIC TO WESTERN PHILOSOPHY AND WHICH HAS SUPPORTED USG AFRICAN POLICY INITIATIVES SUCH AS ON RHODESIA, NAMIBIA AND INCLUDING PROVIDING TROOPS AND FACILITATIVE SUPPORT FOR THE ZAIRIAN SHABA EXERCISE.

(1) A SECURITY ASSISTANCE RELATIONSHIP AS OUTLINED ABOVE WILL HAVE RELATIVELY LITTLE DIRECT OR INDIRECT IMPACT ON HUMAN RIGHTS DEVELOPMENT IN GABON. WE ANTICIPATE NO ASSISTANCE TO INTERNAL SECURITY FORCES. TO THE EXTENT THAT OUR RELATIONSHIP TENDS TO SUPPORT THE STABILITY OF THE MODERATE BONGO REGIME, IT MAY PERMIT IT TO DEVOTE RELATIVELY MORE ATTENTION TO BASIC HUMAN NEEDS OF GABON'S LEAST ADVANTAGED.

(2) GABONESE PERCEPTION OF POTENTIAL THREAT IS FROM SOVIET AND CUBAN-SUPPORTED FORCES IN NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES OF EQUATORIAL GUINEA, CONGO AND, TO A CONSIDERABLY LESSER EXTENT, SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE. IN ADDITION, THE SITUATION IN SLIGHTLY MORE REMOVED STATES SUCH AS CHAD AND ZAIRE IS PERCEIVED AS AN ULTIMATE THREAT TO GABON, ITS NEIGHBORS AND MODERATE STATE THROUGHOUT AFRICA. GABONESE CONCERNS ABOUT INTERNAL THREATS DERIVE PRIMARILY FROM THE POSSIBILITY OF SUBVERSION CONDUCTED BY THE INFLUX OF REFUGEES AND OTHER EXPATRIATES FROM EQUATORIAL GUINEA AND CONGO. GABONESE STRATEGY TO MEET THREATS IS TO MAINTAIN SMALL, LIGHTLY-EQUIPPED, MOBILE FORCES CAPABLE OF CONFIDENTIAL

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MAINTAINING INTERNAL ORDER AND POLICING FRONTIERS. PARTICULARLY, GABON HAS SOUGHT THROUGH ITS FMS PURCHASES TO BOLSTER CAPABILITY OF DEFENDING ITS COASTLINE THROUGH PURCHASE OF A NAVAL PATROL BOAT AND AIRCRAFT. SIMULTANEOUSLY THE GABONESE HAVE SOUGHT TO MINIMIZE THE POSSIBILITY OF SUBVERSION BY IMPROVING THROUGH DIPLOMACY AND OTHER MEANS, TIES WITH NEIGHBORING STATES. ULTIMATELY THE GABONESE WOULD ATTEMPT TO ACTIVATE THEIR SECURITY RELATIONSHIP WITH THE FRENCH IN THE CASE OF SERIOUS EXTERNAL OR INTERNAL THREATS TO THE COUNTRY OR THE REGIME IN POWER.

(3) GABONESE FRONTIERS ARE RELATIVELY OPEN AND DIFFICULT TO PATROL BUT THE TERRAIN MILITATES AGAINST ANY SUCCESSFUL EXTERNAL INVASION EXCEPT BY SEA OR AIR. THE OPEN FRONTIERS DO PERMIT RELATIVELY EASY INFILTRATION AS IS TESTIFIED BY THE PRESENCE OF AN ESTIMATED 70,000 IMMIGRANTS FROM EQUATORIAL GUINEA. WE DO NOT DISAGREE WITH GABONESE ASSESSMENT BUT NEITHER WE NO (IN OUR JUDGMENT) THEY CONSIDER THE IMMEDIATE EXTERNAL THREAT TO BE OF SUFFICIENT GRAVITY TO CAUSE OVERRIDING CONCERN. WITH REGARD TO INTERNAL SECURITY,

GABONESE POLITICAL STABILITY APPEARS SECURE. THERE IS
LITTLE POTENTIAL FOR EFFECTIVE SUBVERSION AND GABONESE
FORCES COULD PROBABLY COPE WITH ANY INTERNAL DISORDERS
NOT SUPPORTED FROM ABROAD.

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(4) GABON MAINTAINS A RELATIVELY MODEST ARMY CONSISTING
OF APPROXIMATELY 1200 MEN WHICH IS DISPERSED THROUGHOUT
ITS NINE PROVINCES. THE ARMY IS SUPPORTED BY A NATIONAL
GENDARMERIE WHICH IS APPROXIMATELY TWICE AS LARGE AND
THE NATIONAL POLICE WITH ABOUT THE SAME NUMBER OF
PERSONNEL AS THE GENARMERIE. AS MENTIONED ABOVE,
GABONESE STRATEGY NOW APPEARS TO BE CONCENTRATED ON
UPGRADING MOBILITY AND CAPABILITY FRO PATROLLING THE
COAST THROUGH PURCHASE OF MODERN AIR FORCE AND NAVAL
EQUIPMENT. SECURITY OF THE PRESIDENT AND HIS
GOVERNMENT IS PROVIDED BY A SMALLER PRESIDENTIAL
GUARD MADE UP OF GABONESE SUPPLEMENTED BY MOROCCAN
AND FRENCH OFFICERS.

(5) THE GABONESE FORCE APPEARS TO BE OF APPROPRIATE
SIZE AND CONFIGURATION TO DEAL WITH PERCEIVED THREATS.
CONCENTRATION ON UPGRADING AIR CAPABILITY, INCLUDING
PURCHASE OF ONE LOCKHEED C-130 UNDER FMS PROGRAM ALSO
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SERVES TO REINFORCE DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES IN THIS COUNTRY LARGELY DEVOID OF SURFACE TRANSPORTATION AND THEREBY TO SUPPORT OUR INTEREST IN SEEING IMPROVEMENT OF DELIVERY OF BASIC HUMAN NEEDS.

(6) ALTHOUGH EXPERIENCING SEVERE SHORT-TERM DEBT SERVICING PROBLEMS, GABON HAS SUFFICIENT RESOURCES TO MAINTAIN ITS RELATIVELY MODEST DEFENSE PROGRAM. TOTAL ALLOCATIONS FOR THE DEFENCE ESTABLISHMENT IN 1978 ARE ABOUT \$120 MILLION OR APPROXIMATELY 10 PERCENT BUDGETED EXPENDITURES (LESS THAN ONE PERCENT OF GDP). DATA ON MILITARY IMPORTS AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL IMPORTS ARE NOT AVAILABLE. WE HAVE EXPERIENCED SOME PROBLEMS IN COLLECTING ON FMS LOAN PAYMENTS BUT THIS SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN PRIMARILY A BUREAUCRATIC RATHER THAN A BUDGETARY PROBLEM AND HAS RECENTLY BEEN RESOLVED IN AN APPARENTLY SATISFACTORY MANNER.

(7) & (8) AS NOTED ABOVE, THE FMS LOAN PROGRAM IN EFFECT FOR FYS 76, 77 AND 78 WILL LAPSE AFTER SIGNING THE FY 78 CREDIT AGREEMENT. THE GABONESE HAVE NOT REQUESTED, AND WE DO NOT PROPOSE, FURTHER CREDITS AT THE PRESENT TIME AOTHOUGH WE CAN FORSEE THE POSSIBILITY OF A POLITICALLY MOTIVATED PROGRAM SLIGHTLY FURTHER DOWN THE LINE. FOR THE TIME BEING, HOWEVER, WE NEED PRIMARILY TO BE PREPARED TO GIVE FAVORABLE CONSIDERATION TO GABONESE REQUESTS FOR FMS OR COMMERICAL PURCHASES. THESE WE ANTICIPATE WOULD BE PRIMARILY IN SUPPORT OF PREVIOUS ACQUISITIONS SUCH AS SPARE PARTS FOR THE LOCKHEEDS, ARMORED CARS, PATROL BOAT OR HELICOPTERS TO BE PURCHASED WITH TH FY 78 CREDITS. WE WOULD ANTICIPATE THAT ANY SUCH COMMERCIAL PURCHASE REQUESTS WOULD AMOUNT TO LESS THAN ONE MILLION

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DOLLARS A YEAR IN 1979 OR 1980. LATER, WHEN THE GABONESE HAVE THEIR DEBT SITUATION UNDER BETTER CONTROL, AND AS CURRENT INVENTORY ITEMS NEED REPAIR OR REPLACEMENT, THIS FUGRE MIGHT INCREASE AND WE WOULD WISH TO MAINTAIN THE OPTION OF BEING ABLE TO RESPOND TO A GABONESE CREDIT REQUEST IF ONE SHOULD BE FORTHCOMING. TIENKEN

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